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## On the Position and Function of Core Values in the Construction of National Cultural Soft Power

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### Abstract:

“Cultural soft power” as a key component of the comprehensive strengths of a country and nation, has been gaining increasing attention from all over the world.

With the advent of this global age, there are three major games between countries, which are games of political systems, interests and core values. And the game of core values has been the pillar of the games between countries nowadays. (Gong, 2014)

As the heart and soul of cultural soft power, core values have been playing a more and more vital role in the international competition, whose effects matching up to the importance of economy, military, science and technology should not be underestimated.

**Key words:** Core Values; Cultural soft power; Position; Function

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### INTRODUCTION

In today's world, the competition between countries is essentially focused on the overall national strength.

“A country's comprehensive national strength includes not only the hard power from economic, science and technology, military, but also the soft power from the attractive force of culture, and values” (Joseph, 2004). On today's global stage, countries come very naturally to be divided into three levels—the third-class ones export products, the second-class export standards and rules, while the first-class export values. This shows that the values have great significance in the construction of country's soft power even the comprehensive national strength. As the father of soft power theory, USA former Assistant Secretary of Defense, Joseph Nye warned United States policymakers as early as 1999, “our values are important resource of soft power, hard power and soft power are essential, but in the information age, soft power is becoming more influential than ever before” (Joseph, 1999).

### 1. INTERPRETATION OF CORE VALUES

#### 1.1 The Connotation and Denotation of Core Values

To understand the core values is bound to the concepts of “value”, “values”, and the connotation of core values as the logical starting point for research. Marx points out that “the universal concept of value is established on the relationship between human and their necessary objections” (Marx & Engels, 1963). Therefore, value is the relational category of the object to the subject and meeting the needs of the subject, and values are views, ideas and attitudes to the “value”. Strictly speaking, definition of values is not uniform in theory. American anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn raised the most noted depiction that “value is externally obvious or internally invisible about which is worthwhile. It is characteristics of individuals or groups, and affects behaviors, measures and purposes of human” (Kluckhohn, 1951). Obviously, he based the concept of “value” on “people orientation” and something valuable. Briefly, values are comprehensive

system about value belief, ideals, standard and specific value orientation, meeting the need of human surviving, developing and enjoying” (Li & Sun, 2007).

Core values are placed in the dominant position of value system as a leading role, and it reflects not only the fundamental interest of ruling class but also the inherent requirements and trends from the actual demands and social development, with the most social members identifying strongly with its core value intention and orientation. (Jia, 2002)

Briefly, value reflects the meaning and utilization to us, while values as our basic perspective on addressing values involves subjective inclination and judging standard between good and bad; core values occupy a leading position in the whole value system and plays conclusive role in it as well. Besides, values are characterized as pluralism, while core values uniqueness.

Every country persists in construction of its core values, but turns out to be different in contents due to distinctive history and culture. Therefore, the denotation of core values is content-plentiful and related to dozens of words. For example, England: freedom, tolerance, openness, fairness, solidarity, France: freedom, equality, philanthropism; America: freedom, tolerance, democracy, fairness, individualism; Japan: righteousness, order, etiquette, patriotism, freedom, democracy; China: prosperity, democracy, civility, and harmony, freedom, equality, justice, and the rule of law, patriotism, dedication, integrity, and friendship; and so on.

## 1.2 Universality and Individuality of Core Values

Core values focus on a relatively stable fundamental pursuit of value in a certain period of time, which is deeply woven into the fabric of the race, and the concept attains the emphasis from every state, albeit with no existence of global unanimous creed. Every country either sticks to its own core values, or promotes its own explanation respectively. Looking over all the core values, no matter American belief, French spirit, or communal values of Singapore, they demonstrate some common characteristics: First, Simplicity, core values should be described briefly, distinctively in theme, comprehensibly; Second, inner inherency and idealism, core values should be deep-rooted into public mind, and people naturally embrace this idea, recognize it and yearn for realizing it. Third, domination, all the other values are subject to the influence of core values, and the core values control every aspect of the whole country; Fourth, constructability, the favorable contents of core values is rather formed spontaneously than the mutual construction of top-to-bottom and bottom-to-top. Only through the support of elites and the identity of citizens, can core values create synergies; Fifth, class nature, ruling class in any state is granted the leadership of material and spiritual power, hence core values, the dominant role in power, are doomed to demonstrate its class nature as a part of ideology

relevant with governance basis, nevertheless in a rhetoric deviation.

Besides, countries differs from each other on the core values they embrace, because these concepts come out of different historical tracks of different races, finally it signify historical and ethnical features, for example: during the lengthy feudal era, Chinese core values are “principle of feudal moral conduct”; In modern china, the concepts are “independence, prosperity”, while in contemporary age, the core values are “prosperity, democracy, civility, and harmony, freedom, equality, justice, and the rule of law, patriotism, dedication, integrity, and friendship”; meanwhile, the core values include ethnical feature as well. For example: The idea on “democracy, freedom, fairness” is both supported by China and America, but they show different impact in scale, which involves the issue of universal value. Human literally shares a common pursuit of value; however, universal value is given special meaning by some cultural super power, and becomes the substitute for cultural supremacy. Besides, powerful and weak states demonstrate different preference in the emphasis of core values. Powerful states ascribe importance to adjustability and generalizability, a representative of cultural supremacy; while, weak states emphasize personality and features in order to avoid being submerged by powerful countries and absorbed with independent culture.

## 2. THE POSITION OF CORE VALUES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL CULTURAL SOFT POWER

As the name implies, “soft power” and “hard power” are comparative, relative to the economy, science and technology, military and other physical strength, “soft power” refers to the cultural, ideological and other intangible power, so the soft power is often known as the soft power of culture. The subject of cultural soft power specifically refers to a country or region with a culture based on cohesion, vitality, innovation and propagation force, as well as charisma and influence of this. These five components come from the identity of core values. In other words, whether there are shared values and the acceptance of it, determines the strength of cultural soft power. Therefore, if any country wants to make the will and strength of all members of society together, it must adapt the core values on the economical basis and political systems. To sum up, any country is committed to strengthening the construction of cultural soft power; it is the construction of core values that is the most crucial and the most fundamental, which relates to the vitality and cohesive force of a nation, even of vital importance.

The core values of a country is the core and soul of the country’s cultural soft power, as a leading and dominant

role in the course of the elements of the national cultural soft power and the construction.

In the process of development of human society, along with the great development of material level, this proposition of “culture” gradually shows an important role in the development and progress of human society, and has been getting more and more attention. At present the academic concept “culture” also shows the enrichment trend, according to incomplete statistics, there are up to hundreds of the definitions of the word “culture” now, and known as one of concepts with the most abundant meanings and explanations in human history. Generally speaking, culture is humanization, humanized nature, which is the natural processing and can be divided into four levels of object level, system level, behavior level and concept level. From the relationship of them, the concept level determines the other three as the core, because object, system and behavior are in realization of ideas under the guidance. Core values are the innermost layer of concepts and the essential core of culture, it solve the question “why to do”, and determines the people “what to do” and “how to do”, namely, all levels of the “culture is the system guided by values” (Graz, 1986). The core values are the core of the cultural system as the most deep-seated factors deciding the direction of our culture. In a word, the core values reflect the inherent requirement of social development as well as the fundamental value orientation of the country, and determine the fundamental nature and the deeper meaning of culture, which is in the leading and dominant position in the whole social culture system.

Rankings in 2010 national soft power are introduced in Skolkovo-Ernst & Young for Emerging Market; America had an absolute advantage over France, Germany, Britain, Canada, Italy, Japan and China. America formed a huge attraction to the world, tens of thousands of people around the world into USA, attributed to the America powerful “hard power”, even more due to its strong “soft power”, USA sketch out an “equality, freedom and democracy” ideal nation to people all over the world by attractive widespread public and popular culture, fast food culture. In fact, America’s victory is based on the America values.

In addition, either subject or object in the construction of national cultural soft power is an entity governed by the core values; therefore, the core values must be dominant in the whole process. There is no doubt that the subject is doomed to be the country’s decision makers or ruling class, so the core values affect the national system design and operation of power, even a country’s way of thinking and discourse system. The core values reflect the politic, economy, society, culture as an ideology, contained in the system, policy, legal, moral; At the same time, the ruling class implants the core values through multiple ways to individual citizens that is certain the object in this construction, and guides them to identify the core values,

until forming the cohesive force, even the comprehensive national strength. A party is to have combat, a country is to have cohesion, a nation is to have vitality, they must have the strong and solid core values as their common ideological and moral foundation, otherwise, the risk is likely to ruin the state and destroy the race. Although there are complex reasons for the drastic changes in Eastern Europe, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the “Color Revolution” of the Central Asian countries and Arabia countries, one of the main reasons is that these countries ignore the values construction, and gradually lost its dominant values, finally lost direction.

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### 3. THE FUNCTION OF CORE VALUES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL CULTURAL SOFT POWER

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In the cultural soft power competition, the core values at the center position are the priority among priorities in the cultivation and construction for all the nations. British Prime Minister Tony Blair said:

Britain is a multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-faith country, its history and national conditions decide that we must cherish the UK’s core values, such as freedom, tolerance, open, fair, justice, solidarity, the combination of rights and obligations, the importance of the family and all social groups. (Dalong, 2007)

Nowadays, more and more countries have reached a consensus. The cultural development based on the core values has become the key factor that determines the success or failure of a country.

#### 3.1 The Leading And Guiding Function

The core values can lead to the construction direction of the national cultural soft power, and guide social members to achieve ideological recognition, emotional resonance, action on the confirmation, finally to ensure the sustained and healthy development of the country. Chinese President Xi Jinping stressed:

National cultural soft power basically depends on the vitality, cohesion and attraction of its core values. Fostering and promoting the core values and the effective integration of social consciousness are the important way to keep the social system operating normally. It is also a vital aspect of national governance systems and governance capabilities. History and reality have shown that building powerful and inspiring core values is closely related to the social harmony and stability, even to the enduring national peace and stability. (Xi, 2014)

Chinese Cultural Soft Power Research Center Director Zhang Guozuo pointed out:

The Soviet Union military power at the disintegration time can not only match the United States, but also often make the United States and the West spook; however, this hard power cannot avoid it disintegrated. The reason for the disintegration of the Soviet Union is not the hard strength but the cultural soft power. Although there are so many reasons for the disintegration of the

Soviet Union, the loss of values and the collapse of ideology defense are the root cause deeply. (Zhang, 2011)

Similarly, during 1820-1840 the GDP of China accounted for 1/3 of the world economy, higher than the current American, but the Opium War still suffered a crushing defeat. After that countless Chinese people have been searching for the reasons of it. First for implements reason-the Lack of gunboats, and then China was busy learning the advanced technology from the West in the Westernization Movement, bought a large number of Western gunboats, but the Jia Wu Sea Warfare gave a loud “slap” in modern China once again; Then, Some advanced personages had turned against the feudal system of modern China unchanged for thousands of years, the backward feudal system became the barriers for the modern revival of China, so the Reformation Movement to establish a constitutional monarchy, and the Revolution of 1911 to establish a Democratic Republic. However, all of the failure final-results show that the real crux is not modern Chinese backward system. Till the new culture movement and the May 4th Movement shouts out “Democracy, Science”, then subverted the old feudal social values and wake up Chinese with the new progressive values, the great power of the ideological enlightenment directly spawned the Communist Party and the birth of a new China.

In addition, the leading and guiding function of core values is also reflected in the micro level of individual citizens, social members affected by the core values, know explicitly “What the state advocate and oppose”, building the internal scale to evaluate “the true, the good and the beautiful”, then affecting their value faith, value judgments and value choices, finally forming a good social conduct, in order to enhance national cultural soft power construction with directivity, advanced nature and effectiveness.

### 3.2 The Inspiring and Agglomerating Function

Along with the globalization, the contradiction and conflict of various ideas and cultural ideology are focused and expressed in the conflict of values. There is an urgent need for a unified view of core values to forge a public consensus, to guide social trends of thought, and then all of that transforms the huge energy to support social and national development.

The historical practice demonstrates that every country needs to coordinate the internal relationship and enhance national cohesion with the common beliefs and core values. The core values deserve strong appeal and cohesion to support for a nation, thereby providing continued power to strengthen the construction of the national culture soft power.

If there is no the core values by Protestant advocated, such as industry, economy and trust, there would be no rapid rise of modern capitalism; and the Netherlands, which is only two and

a half Beijing size, population, 150,000, would not become one of the colonizing power in the world, 17<sup>th</sup> century. (Xu, 2012)

As is well known, if a country doesn't devote much attention to the core values, there will be no strong appeal and cohesion to realize national development. At the same time, the cultural soft power is radiant, which represent mainly in the competition with comprehensive national power. The cultural soft power should be first focused on the country inside, forming a generally identify with the core values, and so as to strengthen the cohesion of the nation.

South Korea is a good example, it uses the traditional Confucian culture of “loyalty”, “filial piety”, “propriety” and other ideas as a common social moral standards, and absorbs the achievements of modern civilization with an open posture, such as democracy, rule of law, human rights, justice. In the early 1960's, the South Korea's economic development is similar with Garner, but after 30 years South Korea became a world economy 14th industrial giant, per capita GDP is 14 times in Garner. There are surely many reasons for it, but the core values are inseparable with the South Koreans, including diligence, frugality, organization and discipline (Samuel & Lawrence, 2010). It is also the majority of people in South Korea follow and implements the core values that make them contribute their own gold to the government to help the country out of the economic crisis in 1998.

## CONCLUSION

Every society has its own core values, namely, dominant values. As the main body and soul of a social ideology, the core values plays an important influence on all aspects of economy, politics, culture and social life, and it regulates the direction and path of development of the society fundamentally. Cultural soft power only through the condensation and the leading role of the core values can form the Universal will of the people, the common ideal pursuits, so as to stimulate innovation and vitality, to promote the power of social development and harmony and stability. Therefore, the core values are the “soul” of ideas of cultural soft power, dominating the vitality of the cultural soft power, and determining the nature and direction of cultural soft power.

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